

HUMAN RESOURCES INVESTMENT COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 17, 2004

Howe Center, Rutland

Members Present: Tom Leever, HRIC; Anne Ginevan, DET; Frank Cioffi, GBIC; Neil Gruber, Helen Porter Healthcare; James Rude, James Consulting; Peter Kreisel, Peter Kreisel, CPA; Pat Elmer, VT Associates; Don Ettinger, Northlands Job Corps; Roy Vestrich, United Professions of VT/AFT; Tom Whitney, AFSCME-AFL-CIO; Gerald Brown, VCQ; Daniel Kurzman, Ethan Allen; Steve Marsh, Community National Bank; John O'Kane, IBM; Wendy Koenig, AVIC; Val Vincent, VT Legislature; Natalie Searle for Tim Donovan, CCV; Pat Perfetto for Richard Palmisano, Brattleboro Retreat; Kay Charron for Richard Cate, DOE; Anne O'Brien for Daniel Fogel, UVM; Sharon Moffat for Charles Smith, AHS; and Irene Racz for Donald Vickers, VSAC.

Staff Present: Chip Evans, Executive Director and Denise Bergeron, Administrative Assistant, HRIC.

HRIC Interested Parties Present: Mary Val Palumbo, Office of Nursing Workforce, UVM; Darlene Murphy, CCV; Craig Stevens, JSI Research & Training; Greg Voorheis, DET; Cathy Dudley, RRMC; Robert Maranville, Secondary Healthcare Career Academy, Student; Lori Campagne, RRMC/NESRT; Michele Kupersmith, HITEC; Mikell Beckley, Voc Rehab; Pixie Hankinson, VT Adult Learning; Peter Taylor, VT State Dental Society; Nancy Burzon, Rutland WIB; Christine Tattersall, Rutland WIB; Lyle Jepson, Stafford Tech; Greg Saylor, VT Associates; Deborah Bazinet, RRMC; and Dick Trono, RRMC; Tracy Steen, Northlands Job Corps Center; Brian Keefe, Senator Jeffords Office; Jack Glade, Bennington Tutorial Center; Mike Bozonie, VTC; John Sullivan, Lamoille Valley WIB and Patricia King, Addison County Business Education Partnership.

WELCOME:

Tom Leever called the meeting to order at 1:00pm and welcomed the HRIC members and guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Tom asked for a motion to accept the January 26, 2004 meeting minutes. The meeting minutes were accepted as written.

Health Care Workforce Landscape:

John O'Kane, HRIC member representing IBM, and a member of the Council's Healthcare Workforce Development Committee distributed a handout titled, "HRIC Healthcare Workforce Development Partnership Report. John reported that Healthcare is the third largest employer in Vermont and is growing rapidly. The research done by this committee indicates that the State faces a severe shortage of a wide range of healthcare workers and professionals. The Committee has looked at the enrollment in healthcare programs that prepare workers for these jobs. Most programs are now fully enrolled, however, the capacity of the education and training system in VT is not sufficient, even at full enrollment, to meet the projected shortages. On the labor supply side, the solution to this is multifaceted and includes; continuing to attract Vermonters into this sector, through such initiatives as career academies to support the growth of the education system, building linkages across providers that will allow students to continue their education more easily, and continuing to attract professionals from outside the State. The average cost to a Vermont hospital for a Registered Nurse is \$70,000 per year, including benefits. Whereas, traveling nurses, who are paid on a per diem basis or by contract, cost an average of \$150,000 per year. On the demand side, strategies include providing healthcare service options that are less clinically

intensive such as serving the elderly and those with disabilities in their homes. There will be public hearings around the State this fall as part of the development of the long range State Healthcare Plan requested by the legislature in Act 53. Under an agreement with the agency of Human Services, this HRIC committee is responsible for development of the human resource component of that plan.

VT Healthcare Training Initiatives:

Greg Voorheis, H-1B Director and Special Assistant to the Commissioner at the Department of Employment and Training stated that his primary role at DET is to write and oversee grants. Greg circulated a handout titled, "Vermont's Initiatives to Date in Healthcare Training/Education". Greg reported that over the past several years two federal H-1B grants provided support to train over 500 individuals in various health care occupations including incumbent, dislocated and unemployed workers. Several examples of occupational areas where training have been provided are, critical care nursing, radiological and pharmacy technician training, and apprenticeship training in healthcare software information technology. These Federal grants brought in several million dollars through DET that were disbursed to a number of other providers for the provision of training. The current administration in Washington had discontinued this funding source and the projects will wind down over the next year however, some of the innovations they supported in Vermont will be self-sustaining.

Panel of Participants:

Greg introduced the Panel of Participants who each described their Healthcare Education and work experiences.

Robert Maranville, a Secondary Healthcare Career Academy student at the Stafford Technical Center in Rutland who is also working at the Rutland Regional Medical Center, described the challenging Healthcare classes that were required such as medical terminology, medical math, and microbiology among others. He stated that every student in the class has received their first responder license. He described how they toured different departments within a hospital to see how the skills they were learning are applied. Robert reported that he was subsequently offered employment at the RRMC with a generous starting salary. Robert was happy to report that his experience has, "opened all kinds of doors".

Lori Campagne, an Adult Radiological Technician student, described how she started in the Healthcare field as a nursing student for one-and-a-half years but did not complete her program as she took time off to get married and start a family. She accepted a position in a Physicians office performing billing and insurance duties. She decided to apply and was accepted into a program that allowed her to continue her nursing education around her 8:00am - 4:00pm work schedule through an H1B funded project. Lori will graduate in September and has a nursing position at the Rutland Regional Medical Center. She is very pleased with the program but is concerned that not many outside of the Rutland area are aware of the opportunity.

Cathy Dudley, the Nurse Recruiter at the Rutland Regional Medical Center, stated that working with the Department of Employment & Training has been most helpful to the hospital. There are many shortages in emergency rooms and psychiatric units that need to be filled. RRMC recruits through job fairs and other means but has found it to be expensive to compete directly with other hospitals. Traveling nurses are available, but at a cost and can be a budget buster. Travelers work on a temporary basis and it takes considerable time to train and orient them. This is also tough on the permanent staff. The goal at RRMC is to recruit and train the local workforce and keep them over the long term.

Discussion followed; Neil Gruber, Administrator, Helen Porter Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center in Middlebury, stated that the Rutland Regional Medical Center has always had Healthcare training tracks and that they would like to replicate the Rutland program in their region. Tom Leever noted that many of the Workforce Investment Boards have identified health care worker shortages. Discussion

continued regarding reaching students at an earlier age with information about the healthcare field and making them aware of all the opportunities in healthcare. There are some programs in place to address this such as Learn to Earn, MedQuest, and the Dare to Care Program.

The Future of the Vermont Healthcare Workforce:

Mary Val Palumbo, MSN, APRN, Office of Nursing Workforce, UVM proceeded with a presentation supported with a handout titled, "DRAFT HRIC Healthcare Workforce Development Partnership Report". Mary Val commented that ten years ago no one wanted to be in the nursing field. Interest in Healthcare has grown now. Today a 12% vacancy in a hospital is considered moderate. The vacancy rate is worse in the long-term Healthcare field. There is a need to change service delivery and try to retain nurses in the field, particularly those over the age of fifty-five.

Craig Stevens, Senior Consultant with ISI Research and Training provided a power point presentation of the Statewide Healthcare Workforce Assessment sponsored by the Healthcare Workforce Development Partners along with a handout titled: Healthcare Workforce Development Partners; Who is the partnership, What did we do; What did we find; and What is next?

Sharon Moffat, Deputy Commissioner, VT Department of Health distributed a handout, titled, Act 53: State Health Plan. Sharon stated that it is critical that we understand the information in the Resource Allocation Plan that BISCHA is working on. We must make sure that the State Health Plan and the Allocation Plan work together. The handout lists a timeline showing a preliminary draft, a public comment period by mid-September, a final draft by December 1st and submission to the Legislature by mid January 2005. We need to thread the Healthcare Workforce issues with the Healthcare Plan and incorporate the Council's recommendations. Sharon reviewed the Health Planning Matrix listed in the handout and spoke of the need to think of continuum of care and end of life care. Sharon pointed out we also need to think of all Healthcare areas including Dental, and all geographical areas. Sharon stated we need to understand the value of the Healthcare workforce and referred members to the website:

www.healthyvermonters.info/healthplan

Members Discussion of Healthcare Workforce Issues:

Chip asked the members for comments on the information that had just been provided.

Steve Marsh, President of Community National Bank stated that even doubling enrollment leaves us 500 nurses short and asked how such a gap can be closed? Tom Leever responded that, the first step is to get the data about the healthcare workforce on the table and make people understand the situation. Mary Val Palumbo of the Office of Nursing at UVM, pointed out that the strategy needs to include both training new workers and re-training and retaining the current workers. She noted that technology can also help workers be more productive, for example, by the digitizing of patient information.

Craig Stevens referred to a report he compiled on the workforce situation for 23 healthcare professions. Often worker and skill shortages contribute to inefficiencies that drive up costs. As an example, we still do not have enough licensed people to assist Pharmacists and that results in too much of the Pharmacists time being spent on filling prescriptions.

John O'Kane suggested the Healthcare Industry has a challenge because the demand for services can be unpredictable. At any given time, workers in one part of a facility such as maternity may be idle while the ER may be overloaded. The next day the situation may be the opposite. Addressing this requires worker flexibility, and that flexibility requires training. James Rude stated that the Associate degree programs in Vermont are under utilized and believes that we need to expand the Associate degree programs to be able to increase the workforce. Roy Vestrich used as an example the Dental Hygiene Program, which has been transferred from UVM to VTC through a sizeable grant from Senator Jeffords office. Roy wondered, if there was a similar expenditure necessary to make the nursing program more effective. Mary

Val Palumbo responded that, nursing is an expensive program to run and that UVM is looking at students with a BA in other areas as potential students for a nursing program/degree. James Rude noted that the low pay for healthcare faculty is a problem when there is a need for excellent instruction and program expansion. Cathy Dudley pointed out that one way to ease this problem is to use senior nurses as mentors and adjunct professors.

Anne O'Brien, of UVM, asked, "if we build it, will they come"? Pointing out that UVM launched a new nursing program and was able to enroll only six students. She also pointed out that there are issues with the working environment in healthcare. If the jobs are not competitive with other employment opportunities due to pay, hours, or working conditions, expanding training programs will not solve the problem. People will not invest their time and money preparing for a job they may not like. She believes that this is not just a training/education issue, it is also a labor market issue. Pixie Hankinson, Director of VT Adult Learning, agreed, pointing out that we need to look at how we define the work nurses are being asked to do. Chip commented that the retention problems being experienced in many facilities may be another symptom of the working conditions issue. He commented that if we want to fully address the healthcare workforce challenge, the HRIC committee should consider developing recommendations that address both skill training and the working conditions. Sharon Moffat, VT Dept. of Health, stated, "what we need from the Council is a fluid and articulate plan for developing the human resource capacity in healthcare, because the needs will be changing over time."

Tom Leever reminded the group that it is the business of the HRIC to identify the issues and work out practical solutions and that this conversation had been very helpful. He thanked the participants for their comments, which the Healthcare Workforce Committee will consider as they move ahead.

Information Technology Skills Taskforce Report:

Chip circulated a handout titled, Vermont Report of the Information Technology Skills Taskforce 2004 - 2005 Draft 7a. Chip pointed out that the HRIC is looking at areas with potential for job growth, such as Information Technology and Healthcare. Chip stated that the IT Skills Taskforce started one year ago as a working committee of fifteen people, and a group of about 60 associate members, who generally do not attend meetings, but who receive all of the Taskforce communications. The committee has narrowed the work down to four strategic goals. He explained that the Taskforce has defined the IT sector as one that includes the obvious firms in the IT business like IDX, but that IT jobs are also found in many different sectors and in almost all workplaces, including traditional sectors like hospitality, manufacturing, and healthcare. IT is particularly important for Vermont because the size of our workforce will not grow over the next 10 to 20 years at a rate that can sustain economic growth. The growth of the Vermont workforce is expected to be only 1- 2 % annually over the next ten years, far below the 5% plus that economists consider as necessary to support economic growth. Thus, in order for the Vermont economy to grow we will need to find ways to increase the productivity of the workers we have. IT is one of the best ways to increase worker productivity. In addition, employers will look at ways to engage workers who have traditionally not been utilized including older workers, stay at home parents, and others. This workforce can be tapped more effectively using IT to reduce commuting requirements, or to allow flexible work hours or work-at-home possibilities.

Anne Ginevan pointed out that the Department of Employment and Training is working with the Department of Corrections to develop employment for ex-offenders. Anne O'Brien pointed out that the potential for IT courses on-line through UVM has not been well developed. Jim Rude commented that on-line instruction is a marketing issue. Tom Leever, stated it should be imbedded in all of their educational tools.

Chip stated that even fairly basic IT skills like database, spreadsheets, and page layout etc. can increase the potential earnings for a worker by 30%. He also pointed out that putting this technology in the

hands of workers can lead to all sorts of innovations that improve productivity and the competitive position of businesses. He referred the Council to the case study of Al's snowmobile in the IT report as one example of the economic development potential of these simple technologies.

Tom Leever and Jerry Brown thanked Chip for a job well done and recognized his hard work on producing the IT report. Approval was given to go to press with the IT report.

David Binch, Director of Vermont Information Technology Center, reported that there were ninety-two participants at the "Women in Technology" conference held on June 8, 2004. David Binch circulated a sign up sheet requesting the name and email address of anyone interested in receiving a report on the conference.

Discussion of the Council's Next Sectorial Study:

Discussion included the possibility of helping small, entrepreneurial businesses with ten or less employees, which make up 80% of companies in Vermont. It was noted that the Small Business Development Corporation, (SBDC) is available to help small businesses. Other topics mentioned were globalization, the Center for Emerging Technology, broadband and financing.

Strategic Plan Accountability Reports:

3.3 - WET Fund accomplishments: Anne Ginevan, Commissioner, Department of Employment and Training, circulated a handout titled, Workforce Education and Training Fund Update for July 2003 through June 2004. Anne noted that the department streamlined the request for proposal process and started a new category of mini grants for projects up to \$10,000 that have a ten day turnaround time at DET. Examples of major projects include:

Through Vermont HITEC training courses, Fletcher Allen Healthcare will employ twenty participants as medical transcriptionists once the course has been completed. It was noted that fifteen hundred individual inquiries had been received and that six hundred and fifty applications were actually filled out for this program. These positions will allow employees to work out of their homes. For the heavy equipment operators program, there were twenty-five participants in which twelve were women.

Representative Val Vincent, suggested that there may be a need to go back to the Legislature regarding childcare and have the Legislature waive the pay and benefits issue so that these programs can be funded due to there being a critical need for childcare workers.

The Workforce Education and Training fund has been granted general funds since 1999 which 2.5 million has been distributed thus far. There is \$360,000 in the budget as of 2005, which is available. \$66,000 did not get distributed last year and will be rolled over to 2005.

1.6 - New Statewide Adult Education Contract: Pixie Hankinson, Executive Director of Vermont Adult Learning announced that her organization was awarded a single statewide grant contract to provide adult literacy services for Vermont. Pixie stated that Vermont Adult Learning would deliver services itself and also subcontract work with three pre-existing providers. Under the contract they offer adult education to anyone sixteen years or older who is out of school and who lacks basic skills. The goal is to make sure all Vermonters have access to the same selection of high quality programs, that there is a single point of accountability, and that partner organizations can enter into a single contract for services across the State. Pixie noted that as part of their contract with DOE the name Adult Basic Education will be changed, and a new name, which is under development, will be used by all providers. She noted that 85% of the 2010 workforce is already working, and that those with low math and literacy skills are finding it increasingly difficult to get and keep good jobs. The Legislature has mandated that Adult Basic Ed work with the Department of Education and that potential dropouts have access to Adult Basic Education support in order to receive their General Education Diploma.

Pixie explained that beginning in July under a contract with the Department of Prevention, Assistance, Transition and Healthcare, VAL will begin extensive programs for speakers of another language in Burlington and Brattleboro. They will offer instructional software for other areas of the State.

Chip acknowledged the special work of Barbara Snelling; Kay Charron; Chuck Stander and Jeb Spaulding in planning for and supporting this change.

Public comment:

The Council was thanked by several members of the public for conducting a very interesting and informative meeting.

Meeting Reminders:

The Human Resources Investment Council is sponsoring the 8th Annual Workforce Investment Board Retreat on Tuesday, October 19, 2004 from 9:00am - 4:00pm at the Killington Grand Conference Center in Killington, Vermont. Pre-registration for this event is required.

The full Human Resources Investment Council meeting will be held the following morning Wednesday, October 20, 2004 from 9:00am - noon in the Oscar I Conference Room at the Killington Grand Conference Center. A continental breakfast will be available at 8:30am. This meeting is open to the public.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30pm.